

Practice education in paramedic science: theories and application

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This book is immediately recognisable as another Class Professional Publishing release. For me, this sets the expectation high given the number of previous good quality releases. They are often written by experts in their field and are very paramedic-focused. I was curious if this trend would be followed given it is addressing education—a topic that often draws much of its evidence from the nursing profession, especially around mentorship. However, both authors are registered paramedics with a background in education and have gained their own relevant qualifications. This gives the reader further confidence that this book will be aimed at the learning environment specifically within the prehospital setting.

The introduction sets out a clear definition of what practice educators (PEds) are, as defined by the College of Paramedics. This is really useful as over the years, we have played with terms such as mentor, coach, educator—and it is time we settled on one term which incorporates all of these and is relevant to the paramedic. The first chapter poses the question ‘What is a Practice Educator?’ It begins with learning objectives and, throughout the chapter, we are provided with opportunities to reflect. The authors dive straight into some of the much debated topics around the role of a PEd: these revolve loosely around what makes an effective PEd;

experience versus formal qualification; and what their primary role should be. Arguments are created through a variety of academic references although, ultimately, there is a sense of ‘fence sitting’ when it comes to crunch decisions such as ‘should a PEd have a teaching qualification?’ and ‘should a selection process take place to choose PEds?’

Elements of teaching theory are explored to assist the reader to make their own decisions on the topics. Bloom’s Taxonomy is explained and broken down, and the chapter closes with an opportunity to review a case study, apply previously discussed topics and finally apply our own experience. This opportunity to reflect is provided throughout the book, often closing each chapter. It is therefore useful that a chapter is dedicated to this very topic. In fact, it may be worth reading chapter 2, then going back to chapter 1, as we are given three well known reflective models and clear instruction regarding how to apply them.

It is widely accepted that the role of the PEd is multifaceted and complex. The authors delve into this topic and present a well laid out format which does a sterling job of breaking down many of the crucial components involved in being a competent PEd. We are given eight different areas of the PEd, which are then divided into succinct paragraphs. Many experienced PEds would be the first to admit that

there is very little that they don’t do—from coach to counsellor, from role model to guide, the PEd really does wear many hats. Finally, we are taken through ‘relational support’—however, I am a little surprised that there is not more dedicated to this delicate issue. I have seen a number of PEds form relationships with their students resulting in some difficult situations requiring managerial and University input: a thorny subject but one which would have been nice to address. It is then touched upon once more in chapter 4, however not in any real depth.

The author moves on nicely to develop and explore the relationship between PEd and learner. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is applied to the PEd environment, as well as the qualities and attributes needed to be an excellent PEd. Most of these may come across as common sense, such as empathy, honesty and approachability; however, it is a useful reminder that there are nine qualities which should be considered. In contrast to the inappropriate relations that can occur, there is a realistic chance that the relationship can become toxic, the author accepts that it is unrealistic to be a perfect PEd 100% of the time and provides potential areas of pitfall. There are tips provided to improve communication, though just the general process, such as paralinguistic and some basic guidance on body language.

Throughout the text, learning styles are explored and constantly applied to the PEd situation. It would have been interesting to have further exploration of how new technologies have impacted on learning styles. While reading through this section, I found myself reflecting on how my style has developed and changed over years of learning, as well as having increased contact and engagement with current paramedic students. Many are making use of YouTube as a resource to access lectures that they normally would not be able to attend, due to geographical challenges or more recently the requirement to socially distance. Virtual reality and artificial intelligence are no longer a thing of the future. It would have been interesting to have the authors' view on how these technologies have influenced learning styles and, in turn, practice education.

The authors then swiftly move onto mentorship, wisely choosing to provide

an overview using two common mentorship theories: Pegg's theory and Zachary's theory. There is always the risk of getting bogged down in such a meaty subject or conversely skimming over the topic and not giving it the depth it deserves. The author finds the right balance, providing enough information and some useful references to continue to read more deeply into the subject if readers so choose.

The authors approach coaching in much the same way by providing a general overview, using the 'GROW' model as an example to explore and relate to the PEd. Leadership is linked into coaching and, again, one example of leadership theory is analysed. The reference used dates back to 1939—a time when this country witnessed great leadership, so the dated reference should not be knocked.

Finally, the book closes by covering the assessment of learners, including the support a PEd may require and providing feedback. I really wanted

to see some of the problematic topics covered here such as failure to fail; however, we are only briefly taken through the different methods of assessment, moderation and setting up action plans using the SMART acronym.

The book concludes by encouraging the reader to continually re-visit the text throughout their career—I would suggest this is a valuable tip. Many of my Class Publishing books have notes in, corners bent down and are often re-visited as new challenges are faced. This book will be no exception.

Although some of the information becomes very familiar for the experienced PEd, it serves as a great guide, especially one to share with new learners as they begin their educational journey or as new problems arise. For those moving into PEd, this book is a must—it will save you many hours of frustration when trying to guide learners through their journey. **JPP**

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